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HOW THE CHAPLAIN CAN MINISTER
TO THE SHOCK OF MOBILIZATION

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HOW THE CHAPLAIN CAN MINISTER TO THE SHOCK OF MOBILIZATION

Introduction

Mobilization may be an emotional word. It carries overtones of fear, anxiety, and shock. Why? 1) The reserve forces are going to play a greater role in future conflicts. 2) The time between the alert for mobilization and deployment is being shortened to meet current army policy. 3) Being ready for mobilization is being stressed. 4) The probability of mobilization seems greater now than in the past. These factors are already creating some fears and anxieties among reserve personnel. Along with anxieties and fears, shock will have to be dealt with when there is a call up of the reserve forces. The unit can have its equipment ready for deployment. The unit can be ready to pack records and FM's, but how do you pack relationships? Spouse relationships, parent-child relationships, and friend relationships cannot be put into a packing crate and shipped off without any damage. The threat to these relationships and the idea of leaving behind a stable environment will produce a shock to which chaplains will have to minister in the event of mobilization. This shock may totally overwhelm the person.

The term, "shock of mobilization," in this paper is viewed as an emotional response that may come to individuals as they are surprised by the notification of being mobilized. This emotional response may include a disturbing reaction, a stunning reaction, a depressing reaction, and/or a disgusting reaction.

Preparing for Ministering to the Shock of Mobilization

The chaplain needs to prepare himself for the shock of mobilization, both personally and professionally. There is no way of covering the chaplain with an insurance policy against shock if he should be mobilized. Nevertheless, proper preparation may hold shock to a minimum. This is very necessary if the chaplain is going to play an important role in ministering to the shock of mobilization to the troops. Included in the chaplain's personal preparation are the spiritual, mental, physical, and material aspects.

Is the chaplain spiritually ready? The chaplain's faith should be inspiring to others. His dependency on his God for help and guidance needs to be evident. Being strong spiritually will help the chaplain deal with his own shock; and, thus, be free to minister to others. The sharing of his confidence in his God can bring security to others. A witnessing of his deep convictions may help others deal with their shock. A chaplain as a man of God is one of the outstanding assets he can offer in the ministering to shock.

Is the chaplain mentally ready? Thinking often about mobilization and visualizing the various circumstances of mobilization, will strengthen the chaplain against the shock of mobilization. Knowing what to do and how to do it, can give confidence to the chaplain when he is called up for mobilization. Participation in mental exercises and classes on mobilization will sharpen the chaplain's mental tools. Also, being involved in the briefing of others on mobilization will help prepare the chaplain for his own call up. The chaplain

needs to accept the real possibility of being mobilized. He needs to come to the point where he says, "I will go if I am mobilized." The mental attitude of a willingness to go is a good weapon to fight personal shock. Part of being mentally prepared is discussing mobilization with family, relatives, and friends. Good communications with the chaplain's loved ones can help him deal with shock during his mobilization and also help prepare the loved ones for the chaplain's mobilization. The chaplain's loved ones need to understand his role in mobilization. They must understand that the chaplain could be separated geographically from them. Things like the future education of the family and alternative solutions to possible problems should be established. It is important for the family to know where to go to answer their military questions and to receive assistance to military problems. Preparing the loved ones of a chaplain, may remove some of the mental burdens the chaplain may have during his mobilization. When the chaplain is mentally prepared for mobilization, he has a good foundation from which to minister.

Is the chaplain physically ready? The chaplain needs to be physically fit in order to give his best. When the body is in good shape, it contributes to the chaplain's well-being. It gives him the stamina to endure the stress of mobilization. Exercise and recreational programs need to be part of the chaplain's schedule. Physical fitness contributes to the chaplain's ability to minister.

Is the chaplain materially ready? Not only should the chaplain have a physically fit body, but also his physical material things need to be in order. He should have concrete

plans for his personal affairs and/or business affairs that could be put into effect in the event of his mobilization. Part of this should include filling out A Guide and Checklist for Reserve Component Unit Chaplain, "Section 4--Mobilization Preparation" and its annexes. (See Annex B) The chaplain should annually have a legal check up to see that his legal affairs and insurance policies are in order. The chaplain should use DD Form 1543. His family should be informed of the various things they will need to do in the event of mobilization. Material preparation includes the chaplain's personal property, e. g., car, house, etc. These things should be in good shape. This may lessen some of the problems that could hinder the chaplain's freedom to minister to others. The chaplain should have his personal and military items packed or readily available. Being materially prepared for mobilization, makes ministering to the shock of it easier.

The chaplain must be professionally prepared for mobilization. This includes educational preparation, congregational preparation, and denominational preparation.

Is the chaplain educationally prepared? The chaplain needs to continue in both military and civilian education. He needs to keep up with current army doctrines and his army responsibilities. By participating in discussions with the troops about mobilization, he may anticipate some of the situations that will occur during mobilization. This would give him some basis to decide the avenue of his continuing education to be a better chaplain. The chaplain needs to attend conferences, schools, and seminars to enable him to minister at his best. Being educationally prepared, includes

being familiar with the applicable regulations, e.g., Compassionate Reassignments--AR614-200; Hardship Discharge--AR635-200; and Conscientious Objector--AR600-43. Being educationally prepared, will give the chaplain confidence as he moves to minister to the shock of mobilization.

Is the chaplain's congregation prepared? The word, "congregation," is used in this paper as the civilian community to which the chaplain ministers. This could include hospitals, synagogues, denominational jobs, and similar things. The congregation needs to understand the chaplain's role in the reserves and in mobilization. Plans need to be made regarding what should be done if the chaplain is mobilized. Plans need to be made for the continuation of the ministry the chaplain is now doing in the civilian community. When the chaplain's congregation is prepared for the mobilization of the chaplain, it frees the chaplain to concentrate on his ministry to the reserves during the time of mobilization.

Is the chaplain's denomination prepared? In this paper the word, "denomination," is used to mean the religious body of which the chaplain is a member, e. g., Lutheran, Jewish, The Latter Day Saints, etc. The denomination must understand the role of the chaplain in mobilization. There should be plans that could make full use of the denomination's resources to aid in the chaplain's civilian ministry when he is mobilized. When the chaplain's denomination is prepared for the chaplain's mobilization, it will add security to the chaplain's civilian ministry. Thus, if the chaplain is mobilized, he can devote more attention to his ministry to the reserves.

Great demands will be made upon the chaplain during mobilization. One of these demands will be ministering to the shock of mobilization. The more the chaplain is personally and professionally prepared, the more he is able to give to his ministry to the reserves. Being personally and professionally prepared, is a high priority for a chaplain. Then he can do his best in ministering to the shock of mobilization.

Ministering to the Shock of Mobilization

Shock is not an isolated factor but is situated in a complex environment. It affects not only the personnel involved, but also their families and maybe even their communities. When ministering to the shock of mobilization, the chaplain may include the soldiers and the soldiers' families.

Ministering to the shock of mobilization includes preparation prior to mobilization as much as possible. Preparing the enlisted personnel, will lessen the shock impact. How does the chaplain aid in this preparation? The chaplain must listen. By listening to the soldiers, he will come to know their needs and potential problems. This listening may be done in various ways. It may include chatting, surveying, questioning, and caring. For example, this writer found that a survey was very helpful. The survey which was conducted included six questions:

1. What do you think when I say the 659th Engineering Company is being mobilized, and you will be leaving home in 12 days?
2. What do you think the reaction of your family would be?
3. What are some things that you would need to do if you were mobilized?

4. What do you think would be the reactions of some of your buddies in this unit?
5. How often do you think of mobilization?
6. Do you think you will ever be mobilized?

By using this survey as a listening device, several things were learned. Included in them is that the enlisted personnel of the unit to which I am attached will be shocked if they are mobilized. They don't think about it very often. They believe the possibility of being mobilized is remote.

Furthermore, in preparing the enlisted personnel, the chaplain may lead small discussion groups dealing with the possibility of being mobilized, some of the problems that occur in mobilization, and possible solutions to these problems. Planning may be done in these small groups. The chaplain may want to use a check list in groups to help them plan for mobilization. The chaplain could adopt "Section 4--Mobilization Preparation" of A Guide for Reserve Component Unit Chaplains.

Another important thing the chaplain can do is get to know his people. He should establish relationships of trust. When the chaplain has a trust-filled relationship with the soldiers, they will turn to him for help and guidance. Also, the guidance that he will offer will be respected and accepted.

Preparing the officers for the shock of mobilization, would include the same things as for the enlisted personnel. In addition, the chaplain should encourage officers to build good relationships with the personnel with whom they work. These relationships will be helpful in coping with the shock of the enlisted personnel. The officers have some responsibilities

to their people. They will need to provide a leadership role during mobilization. They will come face to face with the shock. The chaplain will need to be extra supportive of the officers so that the officers may do their best.

According to the survey, mentioned earlier, officers think more often about mobilization. They believe there is a good probability of being mobilized. Most of the officers who took part in the survey have accepted the fact that they would go if mobilized. This writer concludes that many of the officers are mentally preparing themselves for mobilization. Chaplains need to support this.

Preparing the soldiers' families for the shock of mobilization, may be a little more difficult. Ideally, it would include the same things as for the enlisted personnel. Practically, this may not happen. The chaplain must help the soldiers to prepare their families. The families should be informed. The check list that is shared with the soldiers should also be shared with the families of the soldiers. If the chaplain can help motivate the soldiers to communicate with and to keep their families informed, this will be beneficial when mobilization comes.

Preparing the enlisted personnel, the officers, and the families of soldiers prior to mobilization, of its shock, will facilitate the chaplain's ministry to this shock. Preparation becomes a good foundation on which the chaplain can build his ministry.

During mobilization there will be shock. It takes much of our time to build up meaningful relationships and to acquire things to enrich our lives. When we are suddenly separated from these things, there is shock. If this shock is not temporary, it can be extremely unhealthy. On the other hand, shock does protect us; and it keeps us from coping with many situations all at one time. Shock, so to speak, stretches out the impact over a longer period of time; and, thus, it is easier to cope with it.

When the chaplain encounters the shock of mobilization with the enlisted personnel, he should be aware of some of the undertones that go with it. They include fears, doubts, and uncertainties. Even though shock is a defense mechanism which spreads out the impact, it may foster an attitude of "Let's wait and postpone our problems." Mobilization will move so fast, that if the soldier waits very long to make decisions, he will just create greater problems.

Because of the speed of mobilization and the number of people involved, a chaplain may have to change his counseling procedure so as to help many people at one time. Normally, when this writer counsels, he likes to set up a relationship, to actively listen, to clarify the problems, and then to give guidelines. Usually, this takes more time than will be available during mobilization. Therefore, preparation of the chaplain and the soldiers prior to mobilization is important and should not be ignored.

Even though time will be short during mobilization, the chaplain will still need to actively listen before he responds.

There are five types of responses a chaplain can make in a counseling situation. One, the evaluative response--the chaplain aids the individuals to look over possible solutions and pick the best one. This may be helpful in the shock situation. Decisions will have to be made. The soldiers need to be encouraged to do so and not let their problems snowball.

Two, the interpretive response--the chaplain tries to interpret what the people are really saying. The chaplain tries to get beneath the words the soldiers are speaking. This type of response can be very time consuming. It needs to be handled with care. The chaplain may not know the soldiers well enough to be accurate in his interpretations. One should be quite cautious in using this response during mobilization.

Three, the supportive response--the chaplain hopes to reassure the soldiers and to reduce their fears and uncertainties. This is a good response for the shock situation. The chaplain needs to be a source of strength. He should strive to be a stabilizing influence in a changing situation.

Four, the probing response--the chaplain needs more information in order to help the soldiers make the best decisions. This is common sense; the chaplain needs to be answering the right questions. Having the right information, is necessary in order to give the best help.

Five, the understanding response--the chaplain says, "I understand" and conveys to the soldiers that he really knows how they are feeling. It is important that the chaplain is authentic and sincere. The chaplain should be able to honestly understand, since he will have been mobilized also. This is an important response to the shock situation.

Whatever the response, the chaplain should be ready to help but be wise enough to let the individuals do all they can. When the individuals come up with solutions and work through their problems, it is highly therapeutic. It helps relieve the shock situation.

One of the problems with the shock situation is that the individuals may be emotionally or mentally paralyzed. In this condition, they will not reach out for help. What does the chaplain do with this? He may begin by asking questions.

Some sample questions are:

1. What do you think is happening?
2. What do you want to do?
3. What are you going to do?
4. What would you like me to do?

Shock may result in various reactions. It can lead to depression. The shock of mobilization may so overwhelm some people that they become depressed. This depression may incapacitate people. There are no easy answers for depression. The chaplain should stand by, being a source of strength and reassurance.

Another reaction may be a release of emotion. It is hard to lose one thing at a time--like a dog, job, friend, house; but during mobilization, you lose all these things at one time. Even your immediate family may not be going with you. Eldon Weisheit stated in his book, "Moving," "A short, easy lesson on how to say good-bye; cry!"¹ Crying can be helpful during

¹Eldon Weisheit, Moving, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974), p. 32.

the shock situation. The chaplain should encourage individuals to release their emotions.

Another reaction that may come out of shock is anger. Anger can be against the army, the officers, or friends left behind. The chaplain cannot excuse anger. Mobilization cannot be used as a license to be rude and cruel to others. The chaplain needs to meet the anger situation head on and deal with it. Certainly, the anger should not be kept inside where it will continue to burn. On the other hand, it should not be released at the expense of other people. The chaplain can listen to the people talk out their anger. Then the chaplain can respond and direct the anger to constructive activities.

Another reaction resulting from shock may be busyness. The soldiers may keep themselves busy so as not to confront the situation. Keeping too busy, may be unhealthy if they forget to eat and sleep. This may multiply problems already at hand. The chaplain who is alert to this may be able to give a few words of wisdom to the soldiers who are involved in busyness about planning and caring for themselves.

Accepting mobilization mentally but not emotionally, may be another reaction coming from the shock situation. The chaplain may receive the impression that these soldiers have everything under control. They know they are mobilized. They are calm, cool, and collected. They have all the right answers. Nevertheless, if this mobilization has not been accepted by their emotions, they are still in a state of shock. These soldiers may be headed for a breakdown. The chaplain needs to be there if this happens.

Another reaction to shock may be a concern for trifles. We have heard of the person who discovers his house is on fire and grabs a roll of paper towels as he runs out of the house. The same thing may happen during mobilization. Individuals may become overconcerned with small things and forget to take care of the important things. The chaplain can help the soldiers set priorities.

These reactions to shock can be complicated. The chaplain may not have the time during mobilization to spend as much time as he would like in helping the soldiers with these reactions. However, the chaplain who visualizes these situations, and mentally responds to them, will be better prepared to meet the situation.

The officers will probably be hit with the same kinds of shock as the enlisted personnel. This writer's survey indicates the officers are thinking more about mobilization and may be better prepared than the enlisted people. The chaplain can minister to the officers in shock in the same ways that are outlined for the enlisted people. However, there is another added dimension. The officers have some responsibilities to the people around them. They are to be leaders, examples, and helpers. The officers also may be key people through whom the chaplain may work in serving the enlisted personnel. The chaplain should strive to set up good relationships with the officers and work well with them.

The families of the soldiers whose unit is mobilized will also experience shock when this occurs. This will affect all the soldiers. If the chaplain finds himself in the situation of ministering to the soldiers' families, he

may apply the same procedures as to the enlisted personnel. There are a few things that can be emphasized. The soldiers need to keep their families informed. There must be a strong communication relationship between the soldiers and their loved ones. The chaplain can encourage and support this. The children should not be overlooked. For the small children security is very important. The teenager is beginning to form his own life, and the mobilization situation may be quite threatening. The chaplain can make an appeal to the civilian community to lend a loving and caring hand to those left behind. It would be well if the resources of the community could minister to the loved ones of the soldiers. This would make the chaplain's job easier.

Ministering to the shock of mobilization, may be challenging, trying, exhilarating, exhausting, and/or depressing. Whatever the chaplain experiences, he is to be a man of God, sharing his source of strength. He can be an example to others and a stabilizing influence in a changing situation. He will need to use all the resources he has to again restore order in the lives of the soldiers who have been upset by the shock of mobilization.

Coordination of Ministering to the Shock of Mobilization

Plan, plan, plan; share, share, share; support, support, support; are key words for the chaplain. In order that the most effective ministry can be carried on, the chaplain must coordinate before and during mobilization. Chaplains need to work with each other in an orderly manner. Planning is a continuous process. Plans are not static but need constant

updating and revising. Chaplains help each other by sharing data, methods, ideas, and information. It can be extremely reassuring to have mutual support among chaplains. When chaplains work together by planning, sharing, and supporting each other, this will enhance their ministry.

Coordination is necessary among the chaplain and the other officers before and during mobilization. The commander is responsible for his troops. The chaplain works as part of the team for the welfare of the individual soldiers. The chaplain needs to inform and be informed regarding what is happening. The best ministry can be done when the other officers are supportive of the chaplain, and the chaplain is supportive of their role. With the chaplain and the other officers working together, they will be able to accomplish many things.

Summary

Thinking about mobilization and visualizing the ministry involved, may be shocking in itself. This ministry will be quite challenging. The chaplain can meet this challenge with preparation. By ignoring preparation, the chaplain is overlooking an important tool in ministering to the shock of mobilization. Preparation should not be pictured like buying a fire extinguisher is preparing for a fire; instead, it should be viewed as a regular physical exercise program to keep in shape. Preparation is not a one-time thing. The chaplain must constantly feed his faith, have a positive mental attitude, keep his house in order, and look for new ideas. He must keep

his loved ones, congregation, and denomination informed.

The chaplain will have an important ministry during the shock of mobilization. Because of the speed of mobilization, it is necessary to prepare the enlisted personnel, the officers, and the soldiers' families as much as possible prior to mobilization. Preparing the soldier and those around him, will build a foundation for a fruitful ministry. The most important items of preparation include listening, communicating, relating, and planning. Even with a great deal of preparation, the chaplain may be surprised at the reaction of the soldiers when they are mobilized.

When the unit is mobilized, the chaplain will need to minister to the shock that comes with it. There will be a number of undertones and reactions. The chaplain will need to respond. In his responses, the chaplain must be understanding, and reassuring. When necessary, he must give guidance and direction. Throughout this ministry, a chaplain should be a man of God, a source of strength, and an example to others.

The most effective ministry to the shock of mobilization will require that all chaplains and officers coordinate and work as a team. They must support each other before and during mobilization. Planning and sharing with each other for the welfare of the soldiers will strengthen the ministry to the shock of mobilization.

The chaplain is a key person in ministering to the shock of mobilization. As a man of God, he must multiply and share his strength in this ministry; he must prepare himself and rise to the situation with the best tools he is able to acquire.

ANNEX A
A MOBILIZATION SURVEY

This survey was conducted from October, 1978, through January of 1979. Forty soldiers were interviewed. The responses are summarized.

1) What do you think of when I say the 659th Engineering Company is being mobilized, and you will be leaving home station in 12 days?

The majority of responses can be characterized by the word, "WOW." They could not believe it. The second largest group of responses were, "If I have to go, I have to go." There were a few who said they would be glad to go, and a few who said they would never go.

2) What do you think the reaction of your family would be?

The majority of responses were that their families would not like it, and they would be scared or panicky. Those who were not married did not see any problems.

3) What are some of the things you would need to do if you were mobilized? The responses to this question show that many of the soldiers did not know what they should do. The majority of responses were general, i.e. "I have to do personal things."

4) What do you think would be the reaction of some of your buddies in this unit? Most of the responses indicated that the soldiers thought their buddies would be scared or surprised. A minority thought their buddies would be mad.

5) How often do you think of mobilization? The majority of enlisted personnel said, "Hardly ever" or "Occasionally." The majority of officers said, "Often."

6) Do you think you will ever be mobilized?

The majority of enlisted personnel said, "No," or "Don't know," or "A slight possibility." The majority of officers said, "A possibility," or "Yes."

ANNEX B

A GUIDE AND CHECKLIST FOR
RESERVE COMPONENT UNIT CHAPLAIN

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